

## Andrea Anderson

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**From:** Khya Cummings  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 08, 2023 9:52 PM  
**To:** Desorae Giles-Smith; Andrea Anderson  
**Cc:** CiCi Krempler; Mayor Ken Thurston  
**Subject:** formal complaint

**Importance:** Low

Good evening all,

After much consideration, I feel compelled to share the situations that I have witnessed involving Commissioner Denise Grant and her treatment of her Aide Stephanie Crooks. Over time these situations have become extremely concerning, unsettling and, at times, uncomfortable for me. Let me preface this with, I have served as an Aide to Mayor/Commissioner Thurston for almost six years in both a part-time and full-time capacity. This has given me the unique opportunity to have observed 9 different elected officials and how they choose to manage their office and the duties of their Aides. In the case of Commissioner Grant I have witnessed interactions, heard interrogations, and seen expectations set upon Stephanie Crooks that, in my opinion, have reached the point of creating a hostile environment.

My professional assessment of Stephanie is that she diligently performs her duties with great respect and concern for the office of the elected official that she is assigned to. She demonstrates a willingness to learn additional skills that may help her in her role and she engages very well with residents. In the first months of working with Stephanie I began to see how weary she was of leaving her cell phone at her desk if going to another department, to the bathroom, or to lunch. When I inquired about it, she stated that she does not like to miss the Commissioner's phone calls and that she spends a substantial amount of time talking to her outside of her work hours. Over time, this pattern has grown into a fear of *not* taking her work phone everywhere with her to not miss the Commissioner's call. On one occasion (I did not document the date and time) Stephanie left her work cell phone at her desk. I heard it ring, then her desk phone rang, then I received a call at my desk and it was Commissioner Grant asking where Stephanie was. Upon Stephanie's return to her desk I told her Commissioner Grant was looking for her. She appeared to panic, rushed to return her call then urgently began explaining where she was. On another occasion, Commissioner called my cell phone when I was working from home asking if I knew where Stephanie was. I immediately gave Stephanie a call and again her response was panicked and she explained she was in the Clerk's office and left her cell at her desk. Stephanie has inquired if it is the norm for Aides to spend extended periods of time on the phone with their Commissioners outside of work time. I responded with what my personal experience has been and she replied "you are so lucky". I have been in the employee lounge and witnessed Stephanie take calls from Commissioner Grant and in spite of stating that she's eating lunch, Commissioner will still continue the call imposing on Stephanie's lunch time. When I have shared with Stephanie that she is entitled to take her breaks and lunch uninterrupted, she has responded that comment such as "I have to answer her calls whenever she calls", "it's not worth not answering", "it's just easier to answer her", and there have been other comments that implied that a different expectation had been place on her. Stephanie shared that the Commissioner has actually questioned if it really took her that long to go to the bathroom. I have observed Stephanie's positive and happy demeanor change after calls from Commissioner Grant and she has verbalized feeling overwhelmed and stressed after some of these calls.

In addition there are the times when Commissioner Grant comes into the office. There have been instances when she has opted for sitting at the vacant Aide desk next to Stephanie to watch her work instead of going in her private office and managing Stephanie and her duties from there. I too was in the office and found the Commissioner's behavior to be very distracting and uncomfortable for me. I have previously informed the Clerk's office that when Commissioner Grant sits in our small, condensed work area it is disruptive for me and somewhat uncomfortable depending on her demeanor. I suggested that we propose that she reserve a

conference room if she needed a workspace larger than her private office to manage her task for the day versus sitting in the cubicles with the Aides.

I have not expressed my concerns hoping that with time, and the ongoing support we all receive from the City Clerk's office, that these micro aggressions would subside. Especially since it appeared Stephanie was doing a very good job in her role. Unfortunately, that has not been the case and what I observed last week brought me to the breaking point that I am at today.

On October 3, 2023 I came into the office and was surprised to see a tense looking Commissioner Grant once again sitting in the vacant desk right behind Stephanie. There was no conversation and she appeared to be watching Stephanie work. The energy in that small space was uncomfortable so as I entered my cubicle I greeted Commissioner Grant to which she responded in a very flat tone and quickly turned her attention to her cell phone. She did not move and continued to sit directly behind Stephanie going between watching her and looking at her phone. Commissioner Grant then asked me "Are you going to the meeting?". I was confused and told her I didn't know about any meeting and I didn't know what she was referring to and she said "the meeting at 11 do you have to go?". I responded no and she quickly said ok and directed her attention to the Vice Mayor and they went into his office. At that point Stephanie and I were alone and she was very upset and seemed to be trying to keep her composure. She shared that she had to go to HR at 11am because Commissioner Grant wanted a meeting. Stephanie appeared very anxious and said she didn't want to go with her to HR, she needs her job, and she doesn't want to make any trouble for anyone. She also stressed how she was losing valuable time, that she just wanted to do her job and that she had so much to do before her event the next day that this was really setting her behind with her tasks. I reassured her that she had nothing to fear, and that going to HR was probably a good thing. I pointed out the time and said that she should be on time even if Commissioner Grant was not, so she then headed down to HR. Stephanie returned back to the office quickly and without Commissioner Grant. She hurriedly got back to work and made mention that she had a lot to do but she had her task list and she felt like she could finish everything by the end of the day.

Shortly thereafter, I noticed Commissioner Grant out on the balcony of the fourth floor with her cell phone. This is something I had never seen her do before. I went into the employee lounge to see Stephanie having lunch but eating in a rushed manner. Commissioner Grant was noticeably standing outside the window directly in Stephanie's line of sight. That behavior appeared somewhat intimidating to me and it was uncomfortable. Therefore, I left the lounge and then Stephanie came out with her food stating she was going to cut her lunch short and she returned to her desk. Commissioner Grant returned to the Commission office and asked Stephanie to meet with her in her office. Stephanie did not return to her desk for over an hour and a half. Commissioner Grant eventually left the office and things settled down. Not much later Stephanie received a call on her cell phone from Commissioner Grant. Stephanie keeps the volume on her cell phone earpiece very high and I can usually hear what the person on the other end is saying. Immediately after Stephanie greeted Commissioner Grant on the phone Commissioner Grant said "Stephanie when we met in my office today, did you record me?". I immediately stopped what I was doing and began listening to their conversation. Stephanie was facing her computer so her back was to me and she did not know I was listening and that I could hear clearly.

*Stephanie calmly said "Excuse me Commissioner, what do you mean...did I record you?"*

*Commissioner Grant responded "When we talked did you record my conversation?"*

*Stephanie responded remained calm and said "oh Commissioner no, I would never record you or anyone and I would never record someone's conversation. I wouldn't do that."* Stephanie sounded as if that question was offensive and that it hurt her feelings. Commissioner Grant oddly dropped that line of questioning and began to interrogate her on the status of a variety of tasks and questioning Stephanie as to why some were not completed. Stephanie stated that she had "lost over two hours in meetings addressing your concerns". Commissioner Grant sounded offended at Stephanie's saying "lost two hours" so Stephanie calmly clarified that while the meetings were helpful, they delayed her from completing the task that she had for the day. Commissioner Grant went on to assign Stephanie more tasks, telling her it needed to be completed immediately. I saw Stephanie take notes and told Commissioner Grant that she would address them and they ended the call. In my opinion, it seemed as if Commissioner Grant was trying to

sabotage Stephanie and her ability to complete all her tasks by adding on more things. When Stephanie turned around and I saw her face, I could see tears welling up in her eyes. She became upset and asked me if I heard her conversation and I told her yes. She was visibly upset and said "she asked me if I recorded our conversation...why would I do that...why would she ask me that?" Stephanie appeared distraught and offended. At that point I had enough of being silent. I told Stephanie I had to run to another department but instead I immediately went over to the City Clerks office. Unfortunately Andrea Anderson was in a meeting, therefore I told Jessica Wilson I wanted to inform the Clerk's office that I was making a formal complaint about what I perceive as the inappropriate treatment of, and potentially hostile work environment for, an employee. Jessica and I met privately and Andrea Anderson responded promptly to discuss what would happen moving forward. I then contacted Mayor Thurston to inform him that I would be going on the record with my concerns.

Please let me state that I have no ill will towards Commissioner Grant. She and I have shared many personal conversations about our own families, children, and the needs of young people in the community. I have always respected Commissioner Grant's efforts in the City of Lauderhill. I have made myself available to support her, her office and to provide any assistance that I can for her as well as all of our elected officials. However, what I have observed during Ms. Crooks employment has become so egregious that I can no longer quietly standby. I have decided to speak up in an effort to do my part to maintain the professional, positive, and pleasant workplace environment we have and to ensure that my fellow co-workers have that same experience. I understand that the statements I am making are serious and may require further investigation. I am willing to speak with you further in person should this be necessary.

Sincerely,

**Khya Cummings**

**Aide to Mayor Ken Thurston**

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Khya Cummings